FREEDOM WATCH

The Citizens Project Newsletter

Vol. 1, No. 1 July, 1992

We're Here!

Citizens Project is a new organization formed in the wake of a number of recent incidents and disturbing trends in the Colorado Springs area. In our community, we are seeing a push toward prayer in the schools, pressure to modify school curriculum to reflect religious views, the rise of extremist candidates in local and school board elections, increased anti-gay activity, and growing religious intolerance.

We represent citizens from a broad spectrum of political parties and religious beliefs who are concerned about these threats to our constitutional freedoms by local sectarian and political extremists. We are dedicated to maintaining the traditional American values of separation of church and state, freedom of religion and speech, pluralism, individuality, and tolerance and compassion for others.

Citizens Project will monitor attempts to challenge these time-honored American values in our local community and will disseminate information on these challenges to our supporters. With your help we will provide a countervoice to extremist views in the Pikes Peak region and right the balance against those who would threaten our basic freedoms.

We invite you to participate in this process with us.

Pressure on Our Schools

During the last school year, the Gazette Telegraph reported several incidents of curriculum pressure and Bible in school challenges. Last fall, we saw the effective restriction on the use of the self-esteem series "Pumsy in Pursuit of Excellence" at Pioneer Elementary School following complaints from nine parents on religious grounds; this spring brought the selective cancellation, again after religious complaints, of gay and pagan panelists who were to participate in a four-day District 11 symposium celebrating differences among people; and, also this spring, a lawsuit was filed on behalf of six parents to force Woodland Park schools to teach Bible-based morality. These were reported events; we have also heard from a number of teachers and students about unreported curriculum and book changes in response to pressure or the anticipation of pressure from the evangelical activist right. We will report on these in the future. This school year is over, but we expect to see an increase in this kind of activity next year.

Citizens Project needs input from all those involved with the schools - - teachers, students, administrators, parents-- to help us keep diversity in our classrooms. We need more information about what is happening so that we can help create an effective countervoice. A Schools Committee has been created to monitor new pressures on our public schools and school boards. Please call us with your information and concerns in these areas.

Increased Anti-Gay Activity in Colorado

The fundamentalist Christian community, itself and through various political action groups, has increased the pressure against homosexuals in Colorado. Although these groups make a number of arguments in favor of limiting or reducing civil rights of gay and lesbian citizens, their ultimate argument remains:

> *"You know that homosexuality is wrong, and you believe it is wrong because the Bible says so. "Because the Bible says so" is the bottom-line argument for the Christian."* The Homosexual Agenda: What You Can Do ,p.9 (Focus on the Family, undated).

Some fundamentalist groups have become vitriolic in their condemnation of gay citizens, using the Bible as authority. The Colorado group Scriptures For America has published a pamphlet entitled Death Penalty for Homosexuals Is Prescribed In The Bible, which calls for Americans to vote in the death penalty for homosexuals.

(Continued on next page)

Anti-Gay Continued

Another group, Colorado For Family Values, has sponsored Amendment 2, a gay rights limitation amendment, which will be on the state ballot in November. Their proposed amendment is reproduced in the box below.

This amendment would make it impossible for gays and lesbians to receive discrimination protection in Colorado. There are constitutional problems with the amendment as it is written, as well as misinformation being circulated by its proponents.

Two Citizens Project committees have been formed to explore factual and legal issues regarding Amendment 2. These are coordinating with EPOC and Just Vote No!, two groups organized to defeat Amendment 2. We will be publishing our analysis in an upcoming newsletter. In the meantime, we have copies of the published arguments for and against, which we will send to you upon request.

NO PROTECTED STATUS BASED ON HOMOSEXUAL, LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL ORIENTATION. Neither the State of Colorado, through any of its branches or departments, nor any of its agencies, political subdivisions, municipalities or school districts, shall enact, adopt or enforce any statute, regulation, ordinance or policy whereby homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation, conduct, practices or relationships shall constitute or otherwise be the basis of, or entitle any person or class of persons to have or claim any minority status, quota preferences, protected status or claim of discrimination. [If passed by the voters, this will become a new part of Section 30 of Article 2 of the Colorado Constitution.]

ELECTIONS

The San Diego Experience

"It is the goal of a number of us to try to Christianize the state of California," radical religious right organizer Jay Grimstead said prior to the California elections in 1990. "We think it's going to be pretty easy, actually."

The religious right in California has had great success in implementing a strategy of electing candidates to local offices and school boards by organizing through fundamentalist churches while keeping a low profile and relying on voter apathy in the non-church community. This approach, promoted by Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, resulted in the election of 60 of their slate of 88 candidates in San Diego in 1990. Statewide in California, conservative Christian organizers now claim a majority of seats on 35 of the 58 Republican county central committees, as well as control of the statewide California Republican Assembly. (See enclosed news stories for additional details.)

"Stealth" Candidates

For civil libertarians the most distressing aspect of the San Diego experience is the nature of "stealth candidacy". Many of the conservative San Diego candidates campaigned extensively through evangelical churches and church groups, but chose to hide their true positions from the non-church public until they were elected. This concept of running two different campaigns undermines the democratic principle of an informed electorate. According to Steve Baldwin, political consultant to San Diego's Christian Right slate, "There was no emphasis made by any of our candidates on the non-Christian vote. The theory is, there are enough Christian voters out there to win most races if they register, vote, and vote for who they're supposed to vote for."

Colorado Springs Elections

We are concerned that the "San Diego Model" is in the beginning stages of implementation in the Colorado Springs area. One key role of Citizens Project will be to highlight candidates who appear to be limiting their campaigns to the Christian right while being evasive with the majority of potential voters. We will also review the positions of candidates who are running on "family values" platforms to ascertain their stands on issues of concern.

"I want to be invisible. I do guerilla warfare. I paint my face and travel at night. You don't know its over until you're in a body bag. You don't know until election night." ---Ralph Reed, Executive Director, Christian Coalition

Elections Continued

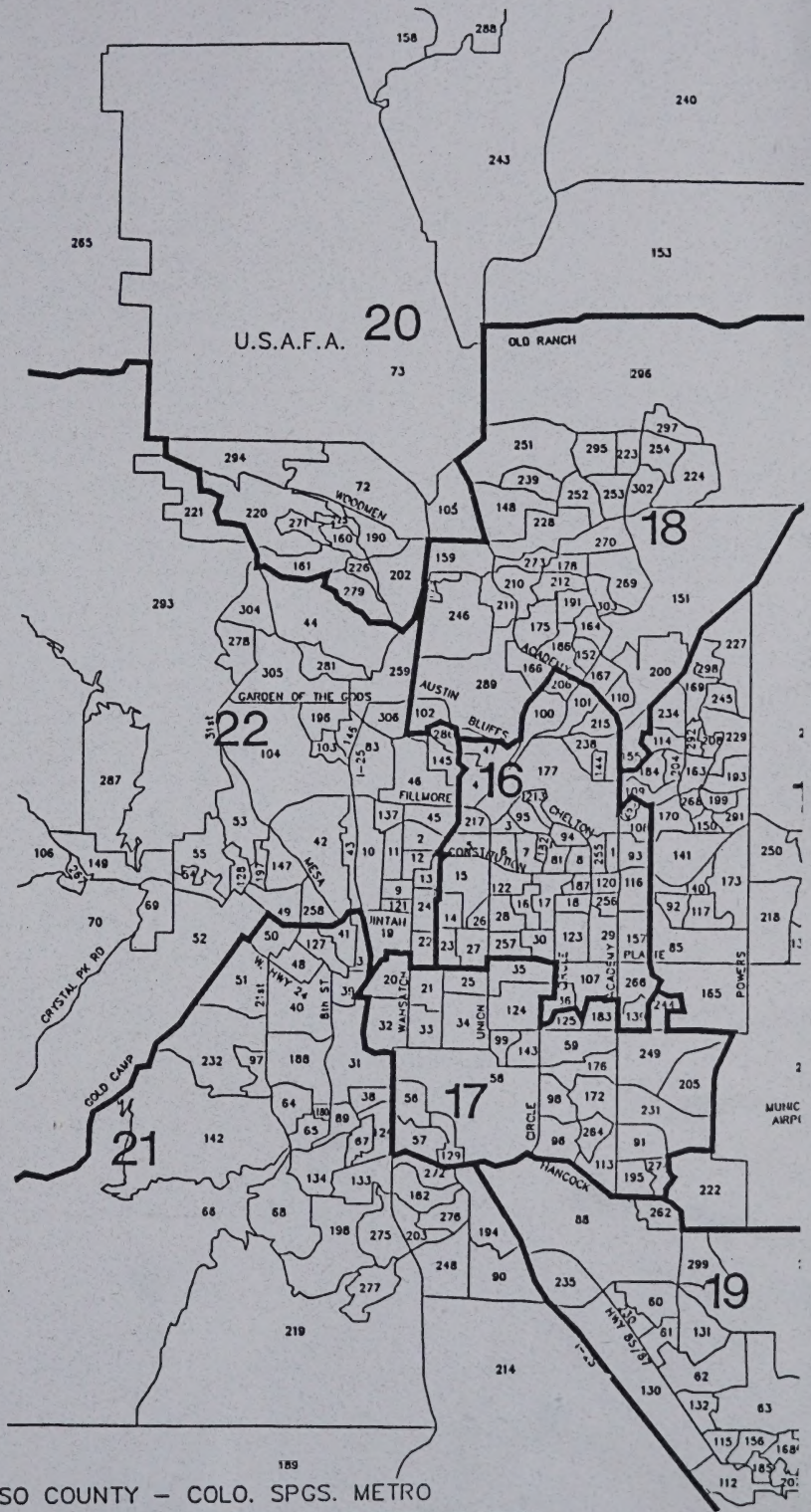
A race of note is the State House District 22 Republican primary race, which pits a political newcomer, Ken Gray, against Marcy Morrison, moderate Republican County Commissioner. The map at right shows District 22.

Ken Gray is a law school graduate of Christian Broadcasting Network University (now Regent University) in Virginia, which was founded by Pat Robertson. Says The Colorado Springs Business Journal, "Newcomer Gray is calling on the Christian community, especially those of the "born-again" faiths, to help him gain the seat. His campaigning and networking in area churches...has disturbed many of the traditional church groups." CSBJ cites Gray as being "pro-life [and] for the voucher system of education." His public campaign literature, however, indicates only that he is for public safety, efficiency in education, and not increasing taxes.

Republicans and Independents in District 22 will be eligible to vote in this primary on August 11. For others, you have until July 17 to register or change party affiliation if you wish to vote in this primary. For registration assistance, contact the Election Department at 520-6225.

To obtain information from the candidates, contact them at:
Ken Gray, Box 1902, CS,CO 80901; phone 540-9066.
Marcy Morrison, 3011 W. Fontanero,CS, CO 80904; 520-6444

We will have more on this race prior to the primary. If you have information to share regarding this race or others that should be highlighted, please call our office.



EL PASO COUNTY – COLO. SPGS. METRO

REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICTS

Announcements

Citizens Project

- We will be having our next introductory / new volunteer meeting on Thursday, July 16, at 7PM at All Souls Unitarian Church, 730 N. Tejon. We will describe our committees and other volunteer opportunities in more depth. All are welcome!
- We are available to speak with church and civic organizations regarding our activites. Call to schedule a time.

EPOC

Equal Protection Campaign will be having three fundraising events in July to help fund their efforts to defeat Amendment 2. On Saturday, July 11 at 10AM there will be a 40 block walk for EPOC. You can walk with or without pledges. We have pledge sheets available at our office; call us at 685-9899 and we will send you one. On the evening of the 11th, there will be "An Evening of Magic" with recording artist Barbara Ann Humphrey, "Tall, tan leggy blonde with a voice like an angel". This benefit will cost $15. and will be held at 7:30PM at All Souls Unitarian Church. And finally, on Saturday, July 25 at 8PM at The Upstart Playhouse (2 W. Las Vegas St.), First Strike Theatre will perform the "Columbus chronicles and chronic-ills 'American the Booty-ful' ". This benefit will cost $10 or whatever you can afford.

For more information call the EPOC office at 593-6015.

Inside Citizens Project

How can you help, you ask?

There are many ways. Citizens Project will be a center for collecting and distributing information on constitutional abuses (and potential abuses) and for promoting action as appropriate. We will be more effective if you will help us gather this information and build our information dissemination network in the community.

On an informal level, this means calling us with information on incidents in the schools, elections, hate activities, economic impacts; calling us with facts and arguments on controversial issues; calling us with schedules of policy decisions of interest that are about to be made. It means meeting with organizations that you are part of and telling them what we are doing. It means passing sign-up sheets to your friends and co-workers. It means putting yourself in a position to hear what is happening through political parties, school boards, city and county governments, churches and synagogues, political and social organizations -- the broader the base we can create, the more we will know what is happening and how best to take action. Finally, it means speaking out whenever we can, writing letters to the editor of the Gazette Telegraph (if we change the balance of letters they receive, we may see a better represented civil liberties perspective), getting visibly involved.

On a formal level, you can volunteer with Citizens Project. We are forming committees to look at issues of note --schools, elections, Amendment 2 -- as well as committees to handle organizational tasks--outreach, volunteers, media watch. Call the office if you would like to help.

If you are not on our mailing list and would like to be, please complete and return to the address below.

Name_____

Occupation / Organization _____

Address_____

Phone: (home)_____ (work)_____

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